DARK HORSE COMICS
ALIENS
4 (of 6)
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ALIENS™

Based on characters and situations from the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture.

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Script: **Mark Verheiden**

Art: **Mark A. Nelson**

Lettering: **Willie Schubert**

Publisher: Mike Richardson

Editor: Randy Stradley

Production Manager: Chris Chalenor

Production: Jim Bradrick

Operations: Neil Hankerson

Cover colors: Chris Chalenor

Special thanks to: Scott Hill, Laurie Jenkins and Pam North.

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YOUR NAME IS MARIA. UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE BAINES AMENDMENT YOU'VE BEEN DECLARED A *TERRORIST*.

YOU HAVE *NO RIGHTS* UNDER AMERICAN LAW. ANY MEANS MAY BE USED TO ELICIT INFORMATION, UP TO AND INCLUDING *PHYSICAL TORTURE*.

I-- I CAN'T *FEEL* ANYTHING.

SPINAL BLOCKS. WE'VE DEADENED EVERYTHING FROM THE NECK DOWN.

DON'T WORRY. IT'S NOT PERMANENT. *YET*.

LET'S MAKE IT SIMPLE. TELL US ABOUT THE CHURCH. TELL US THEIR PLANS FOR THE *CREATURES*.

IF THEY FIND OUT I'VE TOLD YOU--

--THEY'LL MAKE ME ONE OF THEM--

I'M TOLD YOU'RE A VIDEO TECHNICIAN-- GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS. THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO START WITH YOUR LEGS

WE USED TO DO THIS *WITHOUT* ANESTHESIA...

...BUT THERE WERE *TERRIBLE* COMPLICATIONS FROM THE SHOCK.

THE LEFTIST PAPERS ACCUSE US OF USING KIRKLAND PROBES TO ACTUALLY "READ MINDS" I WISH IT WERE THAT EASY.
PERSONALLY I DON'T CARE FOR PROBES OR PSYCHOACTIVES. TOO MUCH DISTORTION.
WHA-WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?
IT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING. TELL US WHAT YOU SAW--WHO WAS INVOLVED--
--AND THEN WE WON'T HAVE TO HURT YOU.
LOOK IN THE MIRROR.
YOU WON'T ACTUALLY FEEL ANYTHING UNTIL WE STOP THE SPINAL--AND THEN YOU'LL WARM UP SLOWLY--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME--?!
AFTER THAT, IF YOU'RE STILL NOT COOPERATIVE, WE'LL FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO PLAY WITH.

TOP SECRET/ GOVERNMENT SECURITY CLEARANCE REQUIRED

I DIDN'T BOTHER WITH EDITING, DOCTOR ORONA. I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SEE IT IMMEDIATELY.

HOW LONG BEFORE HE TALKED?

ALMOST NINE HOURS. I WAS QUITE IMPRESSED.

>!KAK KAK!:-- I CONFESS TO ALL MY CRIMES. I AM GUILTY. WHAT'S IT MATTER?

I'VE SEEN THE INCUBATION. I'VE SEEN SALVAJE'S GOD. YOU CAN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND IT'S POWER.

IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR YOU IF I WERE PART OF SALVAJE'S CONSPIRACY AT LEAST THEN YOU'D HAVE A REASON--SOMEONE TO BLAME.

MARIS--WE JUST GOT A CORPORATE ON THE WORKLINK. ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

CORPORATE SCALE? I'LL MAKE TIME.

IT'S THE SHEER COINCIDENCE OF IT THAT TERRIFIES YOU.

THE REAL WORLD'S LIKE THAT. RANDOM. CHAOTIC. CASUAL.

MARIS, VIDEOLINK. WE HAD A CALL ABOUT SOME CRYSTAL SWITCHING PROBLEMS?

OH, YEAH. JUST A MINUTE.

VIDEOLINK'S HERE. SHOULD I SEND HIM DOWN?

I REMEMBER THINKING--JUST ANOTHER JOB.

THE REGULAR TECH'S OUT SICK--ONE OF THOSE MUTATED FLU VIRUSES--

YOU DO MUCH CRYSTAL WORK?

NOT RECENTLY--CORPORATE DESIGNATES HAVE A LOCK ON THE BEST JOBS.

WHEN YOU'RE FREELANCE IT'S ALMOST ALL PRIVATE OR MILITARY.

ROUTINE.

OTHERWISE I'LL CHECK BACK IN A HALF HOUR OR SO--

SWITCHER'S IN THE BACK ANY QUESTIONS-- BEEP ME--

THANKS.

ONE OF THE LOGIC CHIPS HAD CRUNCHED. I HAD IT OUT IN UNDER A MINUTE.

I WAS--GOOD WITH MY HANDS.

THAT'S WHEN I SAW THEM. CHEAP LEAD SHUNTS, HAND-SOLDERED INTO THE OPTICS LINE. ABOUT AS SOPHISTICATED AS AN OLD STYLE FUSE.

SECURITY TYPES LIKE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE PHYSICAL AND TEMPORARY. OF COURSE, THAT MAKES THEM EASY TO CIRCUMVENT.

DON'T KNOW WHY I BURNED THEM. CURIOSITY, MAYBE THE CHALLENGE.

MY GOD.

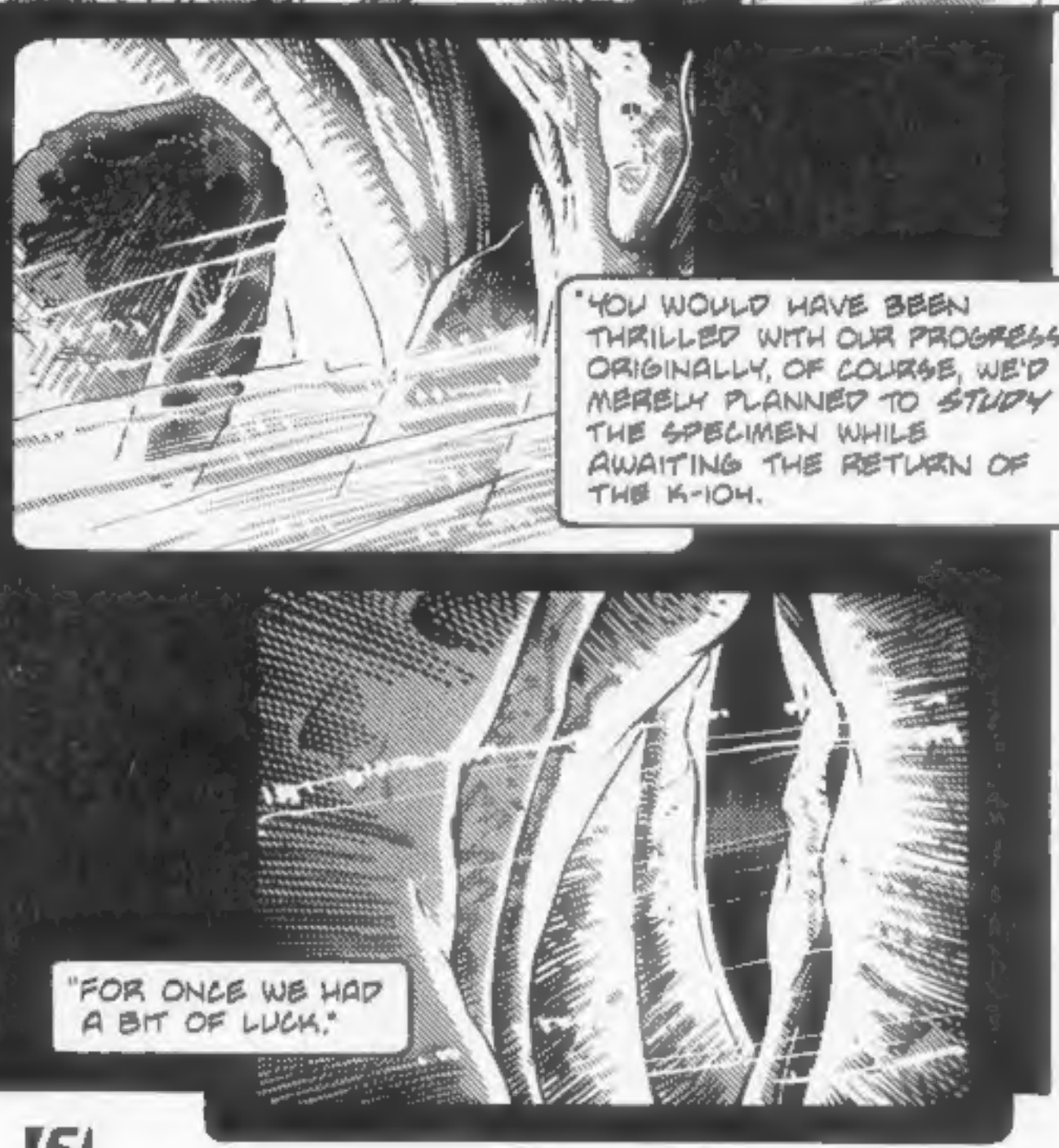
THEY'RE REAL.

HELLO AGAIN. IT'S OSTROW. JUST CHECKING IN.
THE OTHERS HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR SACRIFICE, BUT I REMEMBER. I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER.

WE CAPTURED IT WHILE IT FED ON YOU--

"--IT SEEMED TO NEED THAT PRIMITIVE ANIMAL KINSHIP. WHILE IT ACCLIMATED TO THE ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENT, YOU WERE ITS HOME.
"YOU GAVE IT YOUR BODY-- YOUR LIFE--"

AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T DIE IN VAIN.


"YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN THRILLED WITH OUR PROGRESS. ORIGINALLY, OF COURSE, WE'D MERELY PLANNED TO STUDY THE SPECIMEN WHILE AWAITING THE RETURN OF THE K-104.
"FOR ONCE WE HAD A BIT OF LUCK."

"YOU SEE THE CREATURE WE CAPTURED WAS A QUEEN--
"--AND THAT CHANGED THINGS."

IT'S BIRTHING PROCESS IS UTTERLY PARTHENOGENIC, WITH NONE OF THE PRIMITIVE RITUAL ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUAL REPRODUCTION.

THE AUSTERITY OF IT ALL IS QUITE BREATHTAKING.

"IT SEEMS TO LIVE FOR ONLY ONE PURPOSE-- TO REPRODUCE.

"WHAT'S A QUEEN WITHOUT HER SUBJECTS?

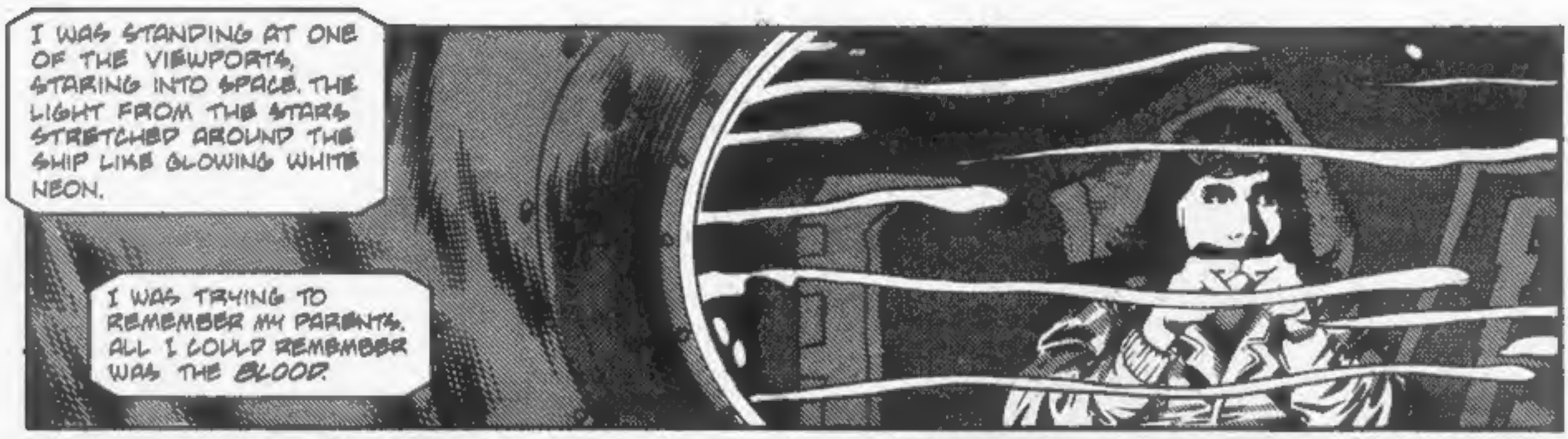
"THE MARKETING PEOPLE WANT US TO HOLD OFF ON FURTHER TESTING UNTIL THEY CAN PUT TOGETHER A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE NOVEMBER WBA-TECH CONFERENCE.

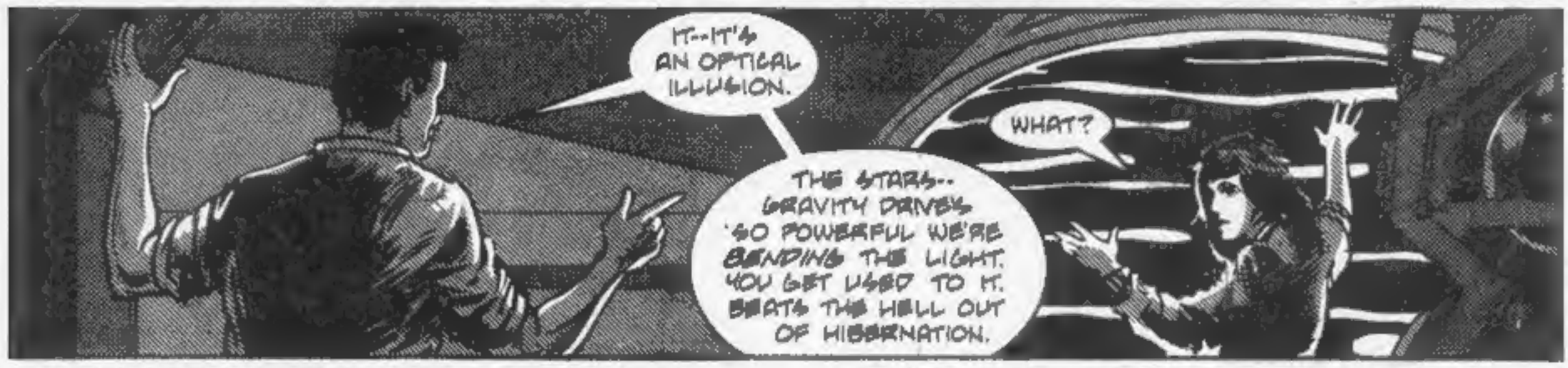
"EVEN WITH THE SECRECY, BIONATIONAL'S INVESTMENT RATING HAS DOUBLED ON THE INTERNATIONAL BOARDS.

"OUR ORGANIC WEAPONS PROGRAM IS GOING TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE INDUSTRY.

"I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU--

"--FOR US."


I WAS STANDING AT ONE OF THE VIEWPORTS, STARING INTO SPACE. THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE GLOWING WHITE NEON.
I WAS TRYING TO REMEMBER MY PARENTS. ALL I COULD REMEMBER WAS THE BLOOD.


IT--IT'S AN OPTICAL ILLUSION.
WHAT?
THE STARS-- GRAVITY DRIVES SO POWERFUL WE'RE BENDING THE LIGHT. YOU GET USED TO IT. BEATS THE HELL OUT OF HIBERNATION.

THE MARINES WERE WARY OF CAPTAIN STEPHENS IN THE AFTERMATH OF PRIVATE BENSON'S DEATH. STEPHENS INSISTED IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, CLOSING THE INVESTIGATION BEFORE IT STARTED.
HELLO AGAIN. MIND IF I SIT HERE?
NO-- I MEAN IT'S ALRIGHT.
I COULD UNDERSTAND THAT ATTITUDE FROM STEPHENS. BUT WHAT ABOUT HICKS?

IN THE MIDST OF THIS, WHAT DID BUTLER SEE IN ME?
CORPORAL HICKS MUST THINK A LOT OF YOU TO STOW YOU ON BOARD
STEPHENS IS GOING TO HAVE HIS ASS ONCE WE'RE BACK ON EARTH.
HICKS AND I--UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

YEAH-- I'LL BET YOU UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER REAL WELL--
COULDN'T HE FIND SOME-ONE HIS OWN AGE TO--
KNOCK IT OFF, EASLEY.

--I SAID KNOCK IT OFF!

NO ONE HAD EVER SHOWN INTEREST IN ME BEFORE. AT FIRST IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY *SENSE*.

THIS IS WHERE WE STOW THE BLASTERS AND THE REST OF THE PORTABLE GEAR HERE, LET ME--

DON'T-- TOUCH ME.

I-I'M *SORRY*. I'M JUST.

IT'S OKAY. MY FAULT.

EVER BEEN AROUND THESE THINGS BEFORE?

ONCE. WHEN I WAS LITTLE.

REALLY. YOU MUST HAVE RUN WITH A *ROUGH* CROWD.

THEN I REALIZED--HE WAS LIKE ME. HE KNEW HOW IT FELT TO BE *ALONE*.

WHAT MADE YOU JOIN THE MARINES? DON'T YOU MISS YOUR FAMILY?

THE *MARINES* ARE MY FAMILY.

LISTEN, ABOUT CORPORAL HICKS.

IF THERE IS SOMETHING BETWEEN--

SWIM.

TELL ME WHY YOU HIT BASLEY BACK IN THE COMMISSARY.

BASLEY'S GOT A BIG MOUTH. HE HAD NO RIGHT TO SAY WHAT HE DID.

AND I WAS AFRAID IT MIGHT BE *TRUE*.

HICKS GAVE ME A SCHEDULE OF TOKEN ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED DURING THE VOYAGE.

HATRED OF THE ALIENS BURNED INSIDE HIM LIKE AN OPEN FLAME. IT WAS ALL THAT SUSTAINED HIM

HE'D LOST ALL SENSE OF *COMPASSION*. HE SHRUGGED OFF BENSON'S DEATH AS IF IT WERE TRIVIAL--AN *ANNOYANCE*.

I SHARED HIS HATRED OF THE ALIENS, BUT SUDDENLY OUR BITTER QUEST SEEMED EMPTY--ALMOST *UGLY*.

PRIVATE BUTLER! DO YOU HAVE *BUSINESS* AT THIS STATION?

HICKS-- HE WAS ONLY--

GET BACK WITH THE OTHERS SOLDIER! *NOW*.

I SAW WHAT HE WAS DOING! IT'S GOING TO *STOP*, EVEN IF I HAVE TO CONFINE *BOTH OF YOU* TO YOUR QUARTERS.

WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU? BUTLER WAS--

MY GOD. YOU'RE *JEALOUS*.

I'M NOT A *CHILD* ANYMORE. BUTLER'S MY FRIEND--

--MAYBE MY ONLY FRIEND. I WON'T LET YOU *RUIN* THAT.

WE FOUND AN UNUSED STORAGE UNIT BEHIND THE ENGINE COMPARTMENT AND MET AS OFTEN AS WE COULD. IT WAS ALL SO NEW TO ME.
..SOMETIMES I FEEL SO FRIGHTENED-- LIKE I'M STILL EIGHT YEARS OLD..
THAT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
I'M FRIGHTENED OF THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU.
I WONDER HOW THAT WILL CHANGE WHEN WE REACH THE HOMEWORLD.
--WE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO CARE ABOUT SOMEONE.
I--I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE.
NEITHER HAVE I.
MAYBE HICKS HAD BEEN WAITING SO LONG--
MAYBE I HAD BEEN LOCKED AWAY SO LONG I'D NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO TRY.
WE STOOD AT THE VIEWPORT, STARING INTO SPACE.
THE ALIENS DESTROYED MY LIFE ONCE. I COULDN'T STOP THEM THEN--BUT I COULD STOP IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE BANDS OF GLOWING WHITE NEON.

:KAK KAK:- --THE BIONATIONAL PEOPLE NEVER SUSPECTED. I REPLACED THE SHUNTS-- PRETENDED NOTHING HAD HAPPENED--
--ALL THE TIME KNOWING THAT I HAD TO FIND SALVAJE.
MARIS--GOT ANOTHER CALL FOR YOU. MAIN FEED'S GONE DOWN AT THE--
GET SOMEBODY ELSE.
OPEN UP, YOU CRAZY BASTARD! LET ME IN--!
POM POM POM
WELCOME. I AM DIDI. WE ARE--
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
SALVAJE-- DAMN YOU, I'VE SEEN IT--IT'S REAL!
SALVAJE'S VISION HAD TAPPED INTO SOMETHING PRIMAL, UNCONTROLLABLE. AS HIS MESSAGE SPREAD, THE DEVOTED SOUGHT HIM OUT--PROVIDED FOR HIM.
WELCOME BROTHER. PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR--
WHERE THE HELL IS HE?

WE KNOW.

SALVAJE'S CONGREGATION GATHERED CLOSER, WATCHING IN UTTER SILENCE. I TOLD THEM WHAT I HAD SEEN.

THERE WAS NO SURPRISE. IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE *EXPECTING* ME.

IT TOOK ME A MOMENT TO TRULY UNDERSTAND

THE VISION HAD *OVERWHELMED* THEM. WHERE I WAS SEEING *MONSTERS*--

--THEY WERE SEEING *SALVATION*.

EVERYTHING QUIET?
GOT A GLITCH IN ONE OF THE INFRA-REDS, BUT MAINTENANCE SAID THEY'D--
WAIT A MINUTE.
MOTION SENSORS JUST PICKED HER UP. SHOULD I ACTIVATE THE GRID?
MAYBE ONE OF THE EXECUTIVES FORGOT TO PUNCH HER IN. TRY A LONG RANGE RETINAL AND A PHOTO I.D. SEARCH.
I'M NOT GETTING ANYTHING.
--OH, JESUS. I'M PICKING UP MOVEMENT ALL OVER THE SITE.
TURN ON ALL THE HOT GUNS AND THE AUTOMATICS-- BURN UP EVERYTHING ON THE PERIMETER.
WHAT'S THAT SHE'S WEARING ON HER--
A BUMMER

SALVAJE'S CONGREGATION POURED INTO THE BIONATIONAL COMPLEX. I WAS STUNNED BY THEIR *POWER*.

I WANT EVERYBODY ON HARD FIRE STANDBY, LOCKED AND LOADED. *NOBODY* GETS IN.

WHO IN THE HELL COULD HAVE..

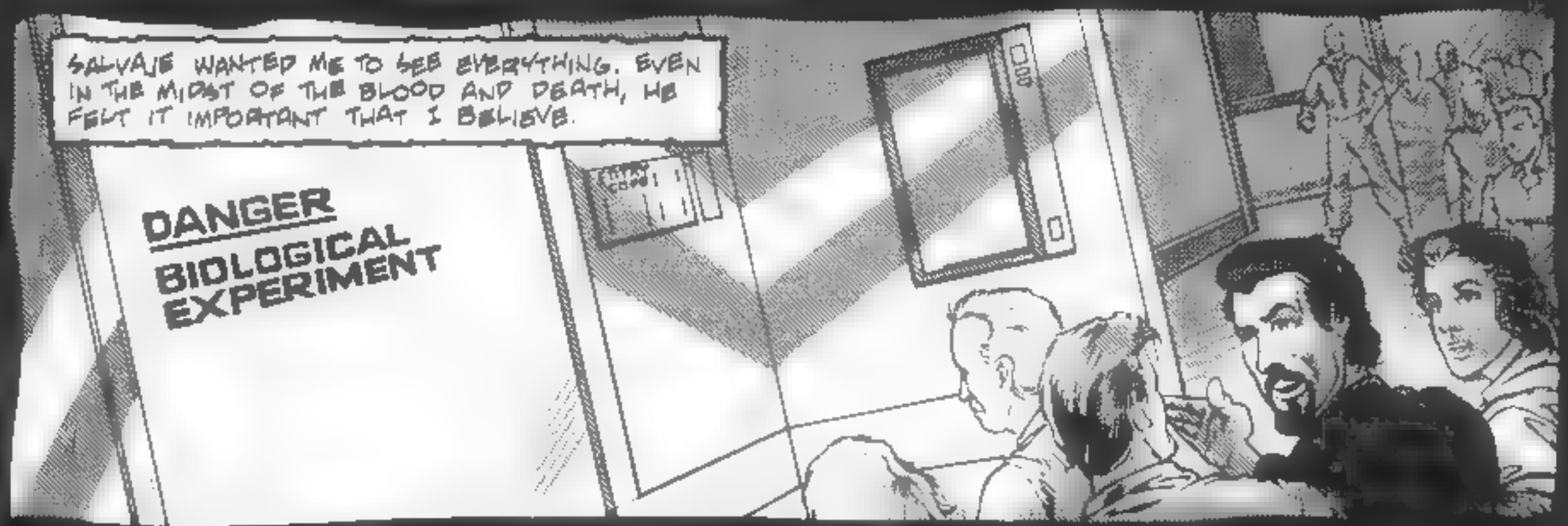
GUNS DIDN'T FRIGHTEN THEM. *DEATH* DIDN'T FRIGHTEN THEM. NOTHING MATTERED BUT THE *CAUSE*.

IT WASN'T THAT THEY WEREN'T FEELING THE PAIN. THEY JUST *DIDN'T CARE*.

KEEP FIRING! KEEP FIRING!

WE NEED *MORE MEN*.. WE CAN'T..

SALVAJE WANTED ME TO SEE EVERYTHING. EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE BLOOD AND DEATH, HE FELT IT IMPORTANT THAT I BELIEVE.



THE CREATURE WATCHED PASSIVELY, HOVERING PROTECTIVELY OVER IT'S BROOD.

WE HAVE COME TO CONSUMMATE OUR LOVE--TO PURGE THE VISION FROM OUR MINDS--

--TO BE ONE WITH YOU.

TAKE ME. TAKE ME. TA--

IT BURST OUT IN A GLISTENING BLUR, VISCOUS TENDRILS OF FLUID FLUTTERING BEHIND IT LIKE SOME OBSCENE AFTERBIRTH.

I COULD SEE HIS MOUTH TWISTING IN PAIN AS THE CREATURE ATTACHED ITSELF--

--AND HE STARTED TO SCREAM.

--GGGAAAHHH--!

FOR THE FIRST TIME, SALVANE UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE MEANING OF SACRIFICE.

--AAHHUKK!--

WHA--
MY GOD. THEY'RE TAKING HER.
AGGH!
PLEASE-- TAKE ME-- PLEASE--!
UKGGG--!
THEY'RE TRYING TO DESTROY HER.

SIR--WE'RE UNDER SOME SORT OF ATTACK! I'VE LOST CONTACT WITH GROUND FLOOR SECURITY--
I THINK WE SHOULD NOTIFY THE-
NO OUTSIDERS! WE HANDLE THIS IN-HOUSE--

SAVAGE'S ACOLYTES DRAGGED THEIR INFECTED BRETHREN OUTSIDE, MAKING ROOM FOR THE OTHERS. I SAW DOZENS TAKE THE SPORE.
THEY WERE ALL HER CHILDREN NOW.

KILLERS! MURDERERS!
THE QUEEN'S MINE!
BLAM BLAM
I HEARD GUNFIRE OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER. SUDDENLY, THE ALIEN SCREAMED.
IT WAS THE CRY OF A MOTHER AT THE DEATH OF HER CHILD.
I BROKE AWAY FROM SALVAJE'S MEN AND STAGGERED BLINDLY THROUGH THE NEST.
THE LIFE FORM PATENTS BELONG HERE. WE DEVELOPED IT. WE NURTURED IT.
BLAM BLAM
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM--WE CAN'T POSSIBLY--
--MOTHER OF--

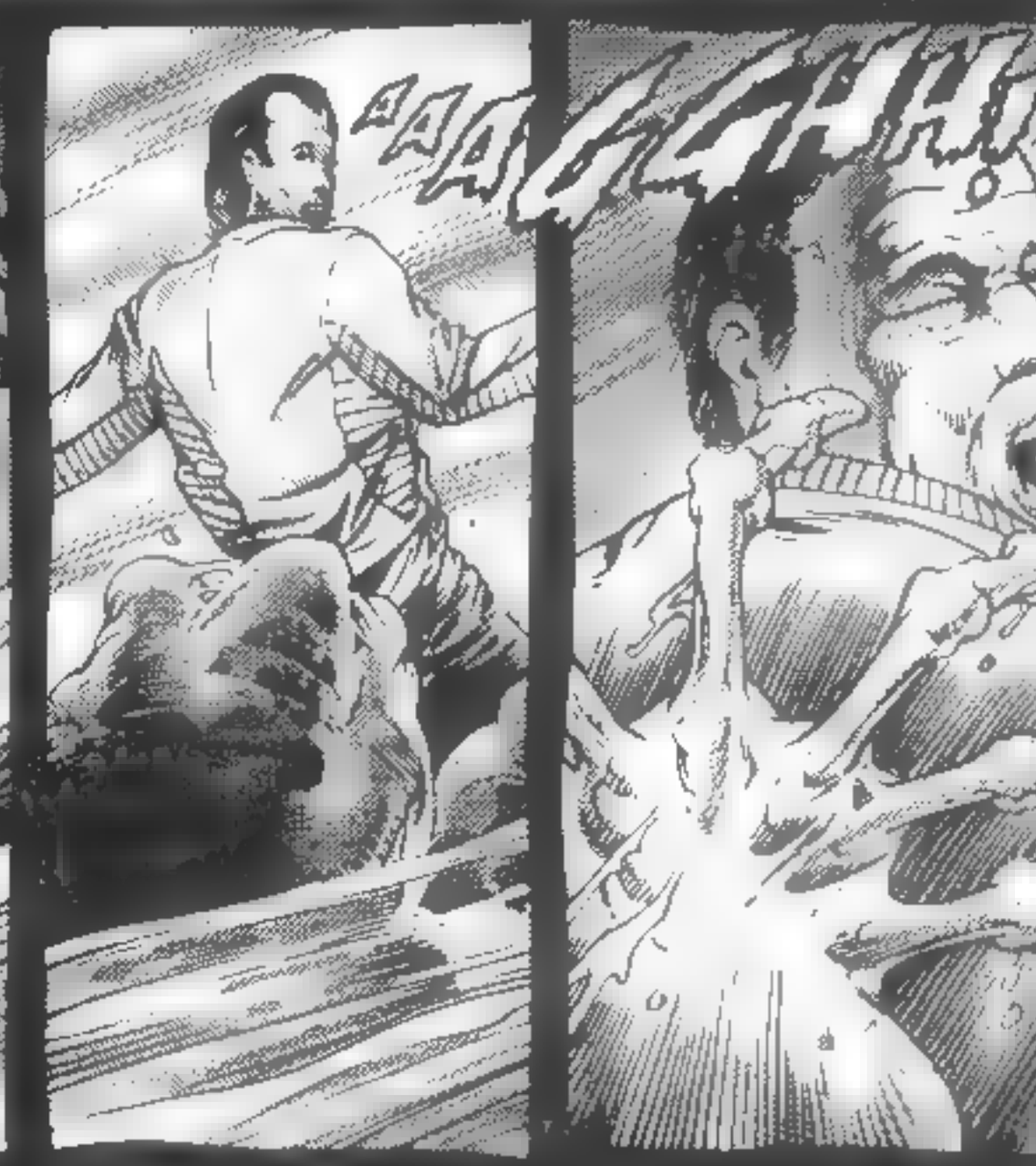
SHUNK

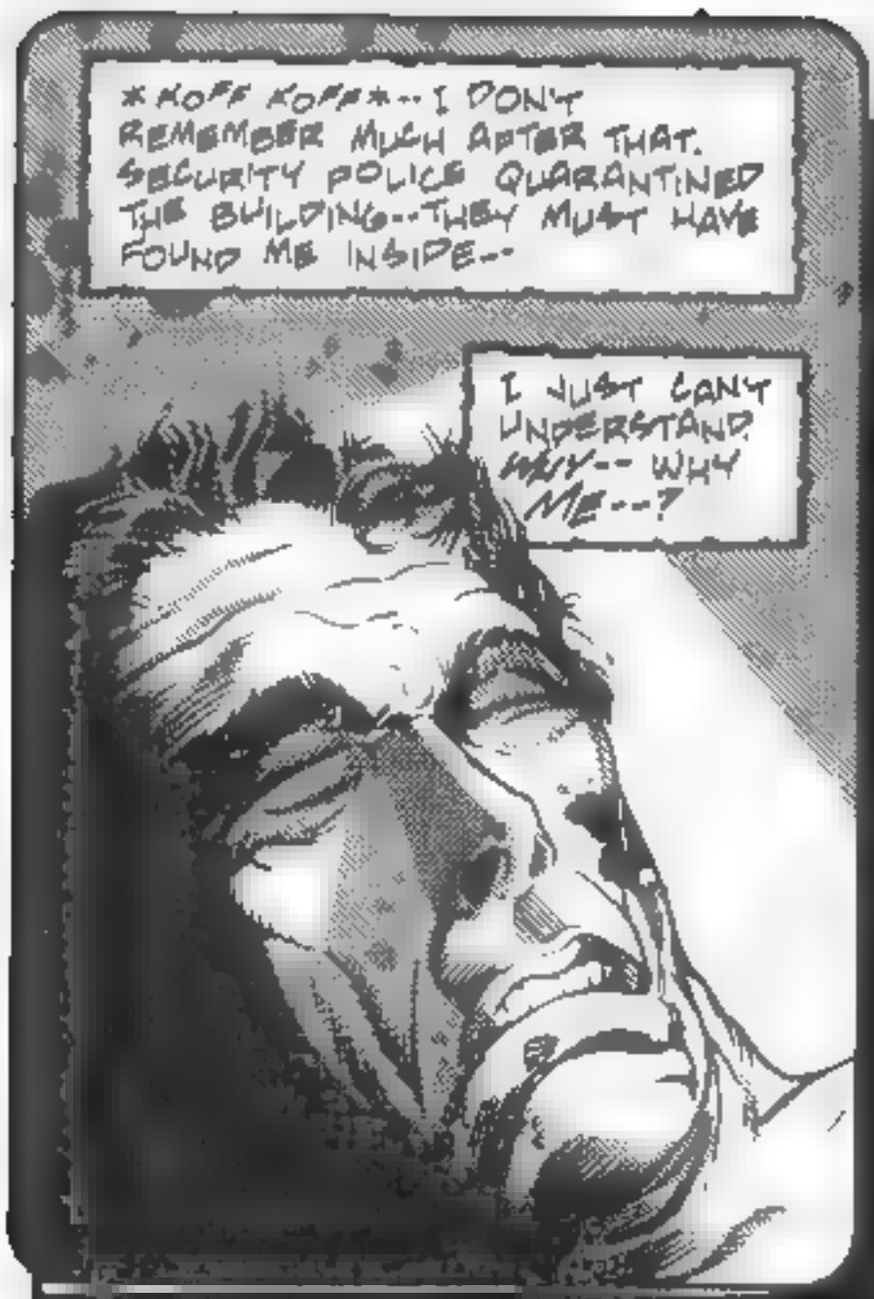
YOU--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- I'D NEVER HURT YOU--

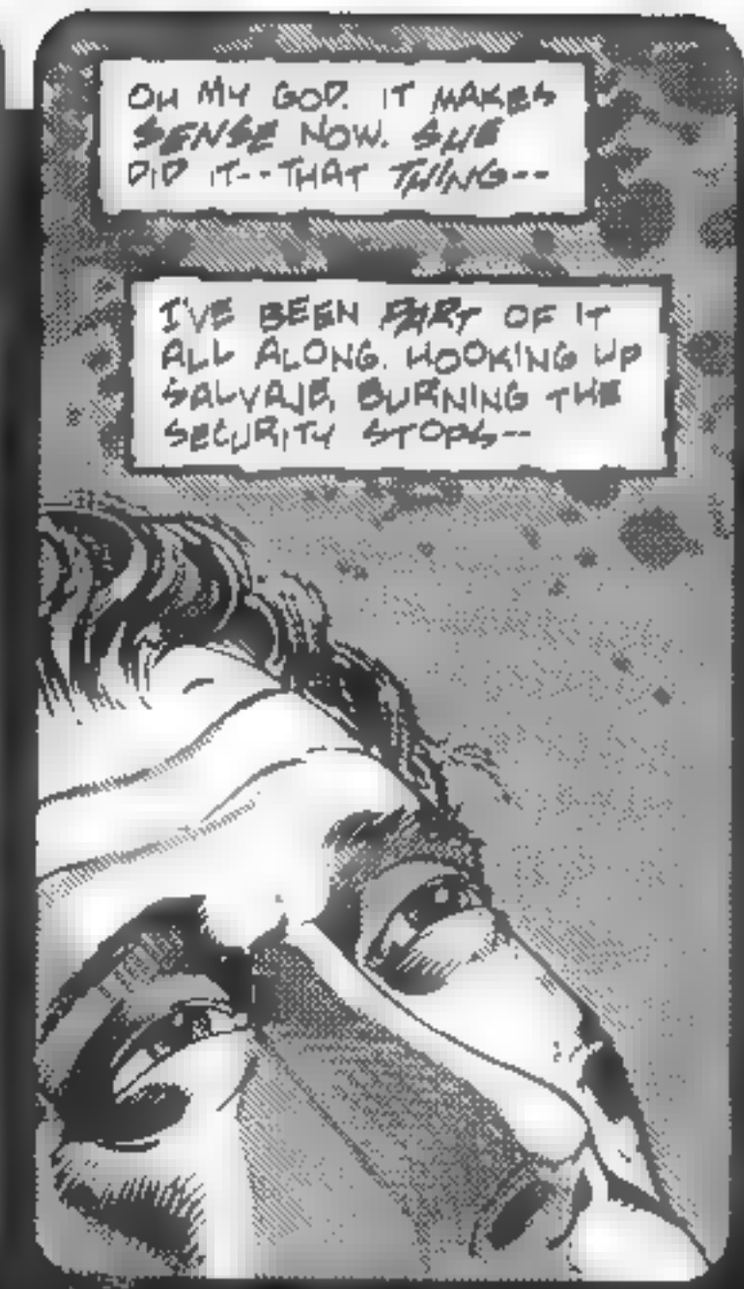
HORNER'S DEAD--YOU'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT OF HIM--

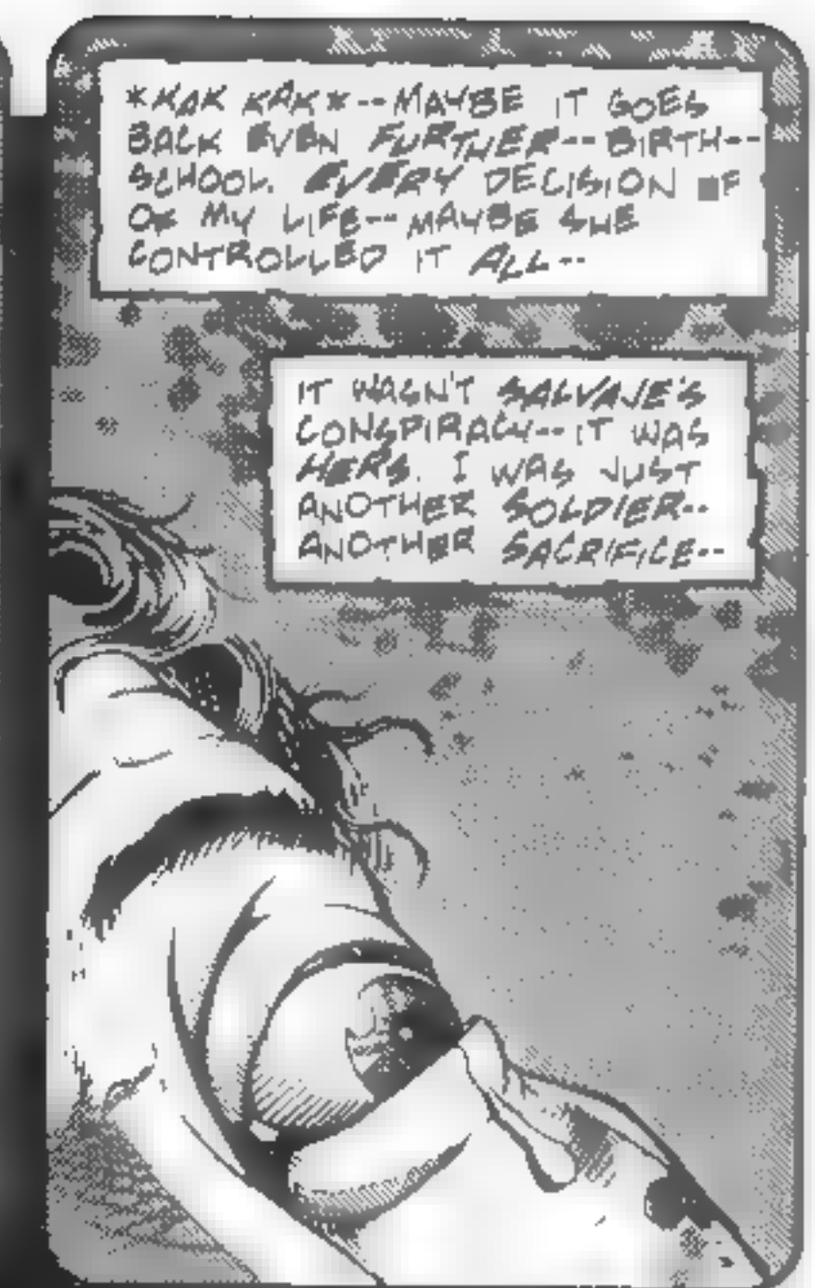
WHACK
UNNNGH!

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND..
--I LOVE YOU..
I ONLY WANT THE BEST FOR YOU--


AAA
AAAGHHH!


KOFF KOFF--I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH AFTER THAT. SECURITY POLICE QUARANTINED THE BUILDING--THEY MUST HAVE FOUND ME INSIDE--
I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY-- WHY ME--?


OH MY GOD. IT MAKES SENSE NOW. SHE DID IT--THAT THING--
I'VE BEEN PART OF IT ALL ALONG. HOOKING UP SALVAJE, BURNING THE SECURITY STOPS--


KAK KAK--MAYBE IT GOES BACK EVEN FURTHER--BIRTH--SCHOOL. EVERY DECISION OF MY LIFE--MAYBE SHE CONTROLLED IT ALL--
IT WASN'T SALVAJE'S CONSPIRACY--IT WAS HERS. I WAS JUST ANOTHER SOLDIER-- ANOTHER SACRIFICE--

OH GOD, PLEASE-- I'M SCARED OF DYING I WANT TO LIVE. I WANT TO--
THAT'S ENOUGH. WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HIM?
ORGAN BANK'S TAKING WHAT THEY CAN USE--EYE'S, SKIN, WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS STOMACH. THEY'LL BURN THE REST.

WE'RE WASTING TIME. WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE THE FANATICS ARE HIDING.
ACCORDING TO BIONATIONAL DOCUMENTATION ALIEN GESTATION TAKES ANYWHERE FROM 72 HOURS TO A WEEK OR MORE.
IF ANY OF THE NEWBORN ESCAPE--IF ANY OF THEM ARE QUEENS--

GOD HELP US ALL.

AS THE SHIP APPROACHED THE ALIEN'S HOMEWORLD, I WAS OVERWHELMED BY A HIDEOUS PREMONITION OF *DEATH*.
BUTLER AND I SPENT EVERY SPARE MOMENT TOGETHER. I KNEW HE *SHARED* MY APPREHENSIONS.
THERE WAS AN AIR OF *DESPERATION* TO OUR ENCOUNTERS AS IF WE DIDN'T DARE WASTE AN INSTANT.
WE MADE LOVE THAT FINAL DAY, SURROUNDED BY THE BLEAK GRAY METAL OF THE SHIP'S HULL.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE ACHERON, I *CRIED*.
I REMEMBER THINKING HOW *FRAIL* WE WERE NEXT TO OUR MACHINES.

SON OF A BITCH--
CAPTAIN STEPHENS--THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE.

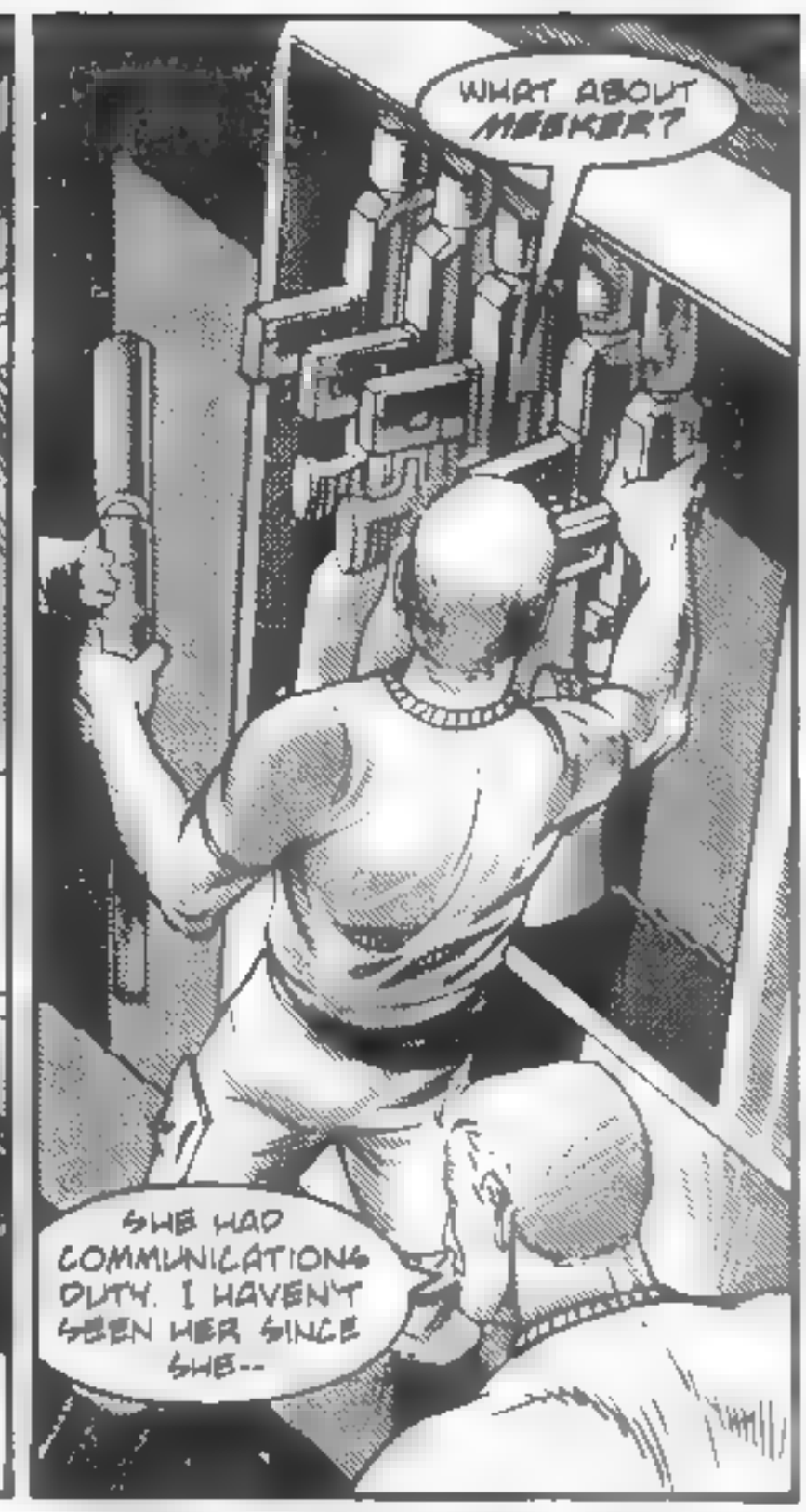
PERHAPS IT'S--DEBRIS OF SOME KIND?
NO WAY, SIR. IT'S CHANGING COURSE--FOLLOWING US
IT'S SOME SORT OF SHIP.

I'LL SOUND GENERAL QUAR--

BLAM
NO. NOT QUITE YET.
THIS IS STEPHENS EVERYTHING IS SET. PREPARE FOR DOCKING.
MASSEY HERE. EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT--

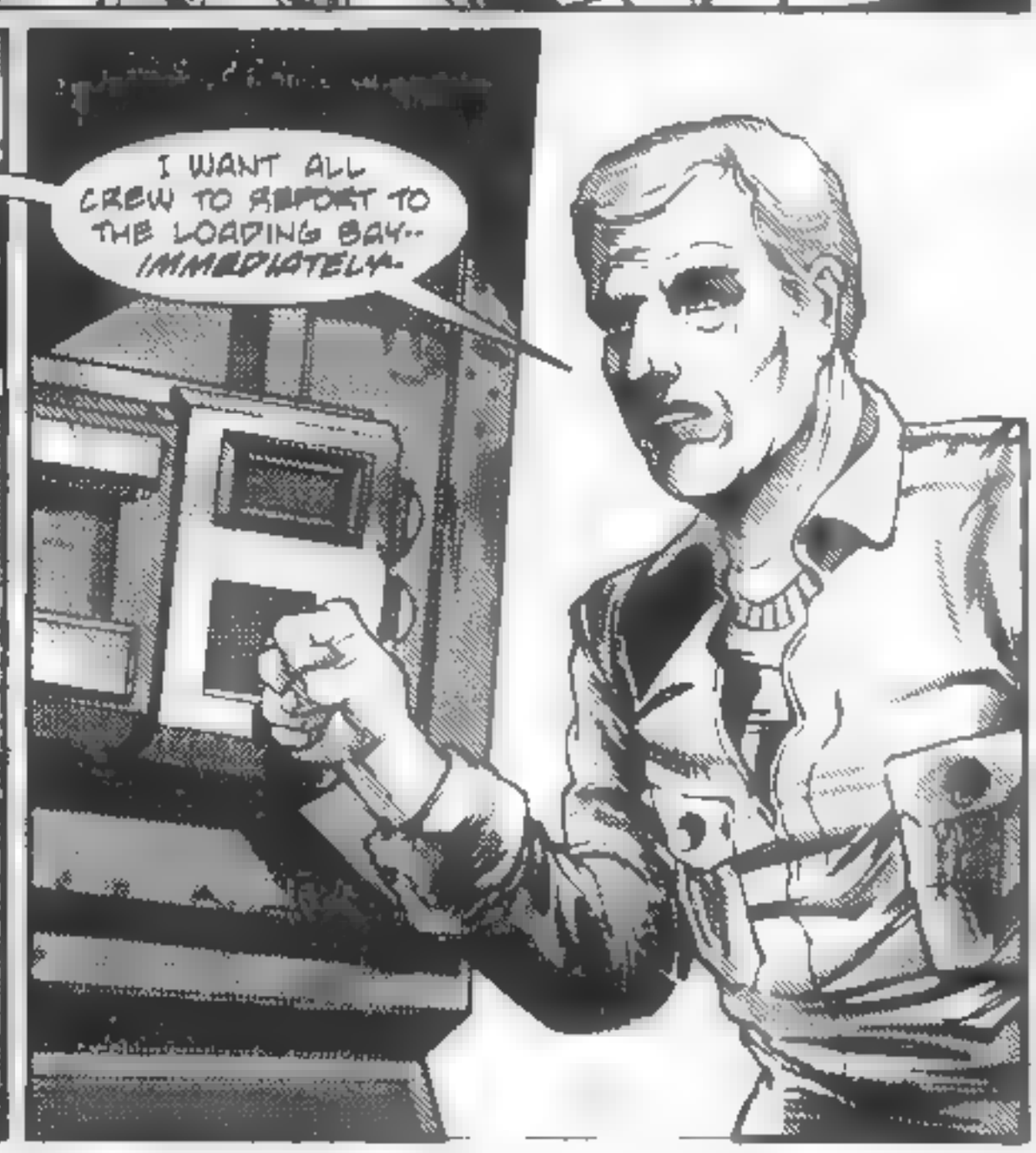
--BE SEEING YOU SHORTLY.
WHAT IN THE HELL--
SOMETHING'S HIT US!
JESUS-- CODE FIVE ALERT-- WE'RE UNDER ATTACK--!
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE--! IT MUST BE SOME KIND OF DRILL--! AN ACCIDENT--
YOU'RE SAFE HERE, NEWT. WAIT FOR ME.
I LOVE YOU-- AND I'LL BE BACK.

ANYBODY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE. NOBODY CAN FIND STEPHENS OR HICKS.


WHAT ABOUT MEEKER?
SHE HAD COMMUNICATIONS DUTY. I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE SHE--

SHIT! SOMEONE'S PULLED THE LOADER MECHANISM! THIS THING'S USELESS!
THIS ONE TOO.

THEY'VE ALL BEEN ZEROED. THIS IS SOME KIND OF SET-UP.
THIS IS CAPTAIN STEPHENS.


I WANT ALL CREW TO REPORT TO THE LOADING BAY-- IMMEDIATELY.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOING TO KILL THE *REST* OF THEM--LIKE YOU KILLED *BENSON*.

WHAT HAPPENED-- HE CATCH YOU *TRANSMITTING* TO THESE BASTARDS?

GET OFF IT HICKS--

YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THE DAMN "MARINES" ANY MORE THAN I DO. ALL YOU CARE ABOUT ARE YOUR PRECIOUS *ALIENS*.

THAT'S IT--NICE AND EASY!

DOUBLE CHECK THE SHIP'S COMPLEMENT. MAKE SURE WE HAVE *EVERYONE*.

YOUR MARINES ARE SAFE FOR NOW, CORPORAL HICKS. WE STILL NEED AN ALIEN SPECIMEN-- AND THEY SEEM TO *THRIVE* ON HUMANS.

HUMANS? YOU THINK YOU CAN USE THE MARINES FOR *BAIT*? CHRIST, DIDN'T THEY--

THAT'S *ENOUGH*.

I DON'T *LIKE* YOU, STEPHENS. I DON'T MIND *GREEDY* MEN--

--BUT I CAN'T COUNTENANCE *TRAITORS*--EVEN WHEN THEY'RE ON *MY* SIDE. NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY MIGHT *TURN*--

WAIT-- MASSEY--YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*-- YOU *NEED* ME--

POOM!

NOT *ANYMORE*.

PREPARE THE DROPSHIP FOR LANDING.

WE'RE GOING *HUNTING*.

continued next issue!

BUG HUNT

c/o Dark Horse Comics
2008 S.E. Monroe St.
Milwaukie, OR 97222

The letter bin is overflowing! Thank you, thank you—everyone involved with this project appreciates your response. I just wish we had the room to print everyone's letters. Unfortunately, we only have space for:

Dear People,

Translating a story from one medium to another can often be a dodgy affair. The *Howard the Duck* movie and the *Indiana Jones* comic are just two examples of how, sometimes, it just doesn't work (sorry, George Lucas).

Thankfully, this does not apply when discussing the ***Aliens*** comic book. Mark Verheiden has actually improved on the basic premise supplied by the two films. Thought-provoking *and* nerve-tingling, his vision of Dan O'Bannon's creations is sheer blinding brilliance. And ***Aliens*** #3 was the best yet! What was attempted by devious humans (in the name of corporate greed) is finally achieved—the breeding of a xenomorph (is that the correct term?) on Earth! It's ironic, as Hicks and Newt are on their way to encounter the aliens in the outer cosmos.

The episode of the xenomorph's "birth" is horrific—that humans would allow such an atrocity to happen to a fellow human makes you wonder who the real monsters are.

Mark A. Nelson's art—words fail me! He has brought a new dimension to black and white art. The aliens never looked better!

Well, that said, you people deserve a big pat on the back for the ultimate science fiction/terror comic—***Aliens***.

Keep on keepin' on,

Kevin Mathews
Singapore

Your point about how difficult it can be to translate screen images to the comics page (and vice versa) is well-taken, Kevin. The problem, I think—at least from the film to comics end of the operation, stems from the fact that the people working on the comics forget that comics aren't film. When we began **Aliens**, *it was decided (by Verheiden and Nelson) that the comic would have to rely more on the tension and mood of the first film rather than the full-tilt action of the sequel. Now don't get me wrong, James Cameron's film was, in my opinion, a brilliant sequel (and a perfect counterpoint) to the first film. But there's no way a black and white comic can capture the sound, or pacing, or movement that made* **Aliens** *(the movie) so exciting—and still fit a story into six 24-page issues. A conscious decision was made to utilize, and build the comic story around, devices and conventions of the comics medium (such as the ability to get "inside a character's thoughts") instead of forcing a square peg into a round hole by trying to adapt film techniques to comics. So far, to judge from fan response, we've been successful, and I believe our future "adaptations" of films (***Big***, by Verheiden, Jack Pollock and John Nyberg;* **Predator**, *by Verheiden and Chris Warner; and the upcoming adaptation of James Cameron's* **The Abyss**, *by myself and Michael Kaluta) will incorporate the same sensibilities that have made* **Aliens** *(the comic) a success.*

Dear Bug Hunters,

You guys are really impressing the hell out of me! ***Aliens*** #3 finally came out, and it was well worth the wait. Mark Verheiden's writing is really first rate; it keeps you on the edge. And I can't say enough about Mark Nelson's fantastic art. Great "chestbursting" scenes!

I'm dying to find out what happened to Ripley, so I hope you will explore this in the next three issues. I also hope you decide to make this an unlimited series. ***Aliens*** is one of the best books on the market and really deserves its success.

Thanks for the space, and keep up the great work!

Robert Knuist
Mountain View, CA

You think you were impressed with issue #3? Wait 'til you see what's coming up, Robert! At any rate, you didn't have to wait so long between issues this time, did you?

Dear Dark Horse,

Congratulations on your ***Aliens*** comic! Not only were the movies two of the best sci-fi flicks I've ever seen, but the comic book adaptation puts another jewel in Dark Horse's crown.

Mark Nelson's artwork is beyond comparison with that in any other comic—black and white or color. And Mark Verheiden's scripting is equally superb.

All in all, the books are outstanding, and it would be a shame to see them end with just six.

Rob Lardiere
Union, NJ

Patience, Rob. Let us get the current storyline wrapped-up before you start us worrying about creating an open-ended series!

Dear Aliens of Dark Horse,

I've read all of the issues of ***Aliens*** that have arrived here thus far. The quality of your books have been exceptional. In an age where everything must be in color, the B&W art of ***Aliens*** has been most impressive. The story has been excellent as well. Keep up the quality.

However, two things must be mentioned. First, the name of the original alien planet from the movies was never called "Acheron." It was classified as LV426. Second, for some reason, which I guess is yours alone, no credit has been

given to the original writers of the ***Aliens*** movies. I hope this will be corrected in the future.

To many ***Aliens*** stories in the future—comics and movies.

Sincerely,

M.R. Hill
Fairport, NY

I hate to have to prove you wrong, M.R.—especially right here in front of the world and everyone—but in the film **Aliens** *it was stated quite definitely that the colonists "terraforming" LV426 had renamed it* "Acheron." *Trust me. 20th Century Fox wouldn't let me print it if it wasn't true.*

As for giving credit where credit is due—excuse the oversight. However, I think we'd also have to thank the directors, casts, crews and everyone else who worked on the two films for providing us with such a strong "jumping off" point, and we haven't the room to list everyone individually. Rest assured, M.R., there can't be too many readers out there who are suffering under the mistaken belief that **Aliens** *is an original creation of either Dark Horse or Verheiden and Nelson.*

Dear Aliens,

I just bought ***Aliens*** #3, and I loved it! The feel it gives off is unexplainable! ***Aliens*** happens to be my favorite movie, so I couldn't wait to add the comic book (I collect comics) to my growing collection of posters, models and other memorabilia. When I first saw it last June, I immediately got it, and now, 8 months later, I cannot find a first printing anywhere! The only complaint I have is that the issues only come in every four months. But it's worth the wait! So pleeeeeease make it a continuing series!

Sincerely,

Jason Skaarvold
Spokane, WA

We're getting the four month "wait" taken care of, Jason. But there you go again with this "continuing series" business...

Dear Mark^2,

The most successful aspect of the ***Aliens*** comic so far is that you've managed to transfer that eerie feeling of the films onto the printed page.

No one can be trusted except Hicks and Newt.

Something's going on that nobody knows about.

Once again, someone, or several someones, are intent on keeping the deadly aliens alive for their own purposes with no regard to the danger (epitomized in #3 by Dr. Ostrow shooting one of his own guards in order to save the chestburster's life).

Someone on board the ship is intent on wiping out the crew.

The religious nut wants everyone to worship the creatures, for some wonderfully misplaced ideal.

And now you throw in the telepathic "message" from the aliens Queen!

The art contributes equally to the atmosphere, and I'm sure the monotone adds to that. The pictures are stark black and white, and for everyone in the story, so are the issues they're fighting for. Also, it's easier to convey the darkness of the situation when you don't have color getting in the way. The aliens themselves are drawn exquisitely. And I was most impressed with Likowski's dream sequence, which I had no idea it was until he woke up. But it was a chilling look inside the mind and needs of his foreign parasite. The "newborn's" immediate predilection for bloody death reflects the short story that was in ***Dark Horse Presents*** #24.

Judging by the letters page, you've picked up a lot of new readers who hadn't picked up a Dark Horse comic before. I hope that's reflected in getting new readers interested in your other titles.

Until ***Aliens*** 4 (the comic, not the movie), take care.

Malcolm Bourne
Manchester, England

Yes, we are beginning to feel the impact of new readers trying out some of our other titles (a surprising number of people wrote in saying they'd picked up **DHP** *#24 for the* **Aliens** *cover story, but they're continuing to buy it because of the other stories inside), but it's always good to hear from one of our long-time readers, too.*

Dear Dark Horse,

The 20th Century Fox motion picture Aliens is the best sci-fi movie I have ever seen at this point (I hear they're producing another sequel). The movie offers sparkling and realistic effects. I figured I'd find the same high-quality in your comic. I guess you can say that I did. I have some questions, though.

1) Have you considered using scenes from the comic on the covers?

2) Issue #1 stated that Hicks' former comrades avoided him due to his disfiguring contact with the aliens "blood." Even Ripley? She returned for her cat in Alien, didn't she?

3) Also in issue #1 was an interesting document explaining how television has changed since our time. Did this really have any relation to the storyline?

4) Issue #2 introduced a man named Likowski. I don't find him important—unless he's Newt's father (a wild guess)?

5) Again, in issue #2, I don't recall you introducing the new recruit on page 12, panel 3 (on Blake's right shoulder).

6) And now I have to discuss what really aggravates me: What happened to the bi-monthly schedule? Looks like tri-monthly to me. What's up?

I couldn't wait (although I'm still waiting) for #3, so I decided to purchase **Dark Horse Presents** #24. I found the Aliens story very interesting. It explains many facts regarding the alien's mysterious nature. My compliments to Mark A. Nelson for making B&W art so remarkably "colorful."

7) One question from ***DHP*** #24: During and after

(continued on next page)

all of the struggles and battles the aliens went through, I don't recall seeing a single drop of the acid which is their blood. Why not?

Jeff Valenzuela
(address withheld by request)

Okay, Jeff, taking your questions in order:

1) Sure, we've considered it, but Nelson creates such beautiful scenes with just the aliens, we decided we didn't want him to redraw a panel from the story.

2) Everyone wants to know about Ripley and why she isn't present in the story, don't they? Well, troops, all I can tell you is to sit on your hands and try to relax—all will be revealed in the fullness of time.

3) No. The bit about the future state of television has nothing to do with the story (unless, of course, you count any of the events surrounding the not-so-Right Reverend Salvaje as part of the story).

4) Likowski Newt's father? That is a wild guess! No, he's not related to Newt in anyway. However, as stated (albeit obliquely) in issue #2, Likowski is the pilot of the derelict cargo ship, Junket, that the Coast Guard blew up back in issue #1. It was indicated in #1 that the pilot's pod was missing from the ship. Unluckily for Likowski, the Bionational boys picked him (and his unwanted passenger) up and "saved" him before he could expire in the vacuum of space. All clear now?

5) Oh, him. He's just another member of Hicks' new squad, and the panel in question was his introduction. Around Dark Horse he's affectionately known as "the new recruit on Blake's right shoulder."

6) Take my advice, Jeff—just forget about any schedule. Great work can't be hurried (much). However, you should notice considerably less time between future issues.

7) No aliens blood in ***DHP*** *#24? Why it was all over the place (check out pages 4 and 5, fer instance!). However, if you're asking why there was no close-up panel depicting the effects of the aliens' blood on various substances, there's a simple explanation: such a scene wasn't part of that story.*

Well, if you think things look bad for Hicks and company this issue, just wait! Next issue they land on the surface of the aliens' homeworld! Meanwhile, back on Earth, Salvaje and his followers await the "redemption" they believe their "communion" with the aliens will bring!

—Randy

COMING THIS SPRING!

By Mark Verheiden and Chris Warner!

IN COLOR!